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He raised his hand, and a wisp of grayish energy was extracted from the air, hovering in his palm. The energy seemed ordinary, yet it possessed a subtle power to devour and annihilate everything.

The sinister man tried to probe it with his soul power, but the energy suddenly surged violently, absorbing nearly half of his soul power!

“Pfft!” He groaned, his face turning pale, and hurriedly shook off the energy.

“My lord!” Two Soul Hunters rushed forward from behind.

The sinister-looking man waved his hand, a flicker of surprise and uncertainty in his eyes: “This power... seems to have a natural restraint on soul power. Report this to Lord Puppet General immediately! Also, send men to search the surrounding thousand miles for any suspicious individuals!”

“Yes!”

The three figures vanished swiftly.

Meanwhile, three hours later, Chen Ping and his companions arrived before a ruin concealed by vines and ancient trees.

Chen Ping parted the tall weeds, revealing a dilapidated array platform beneath.

The platform was constructed of a bluish-gray spirit stone, its surface covered with ancient beast-shaped runes, most of which were now blurred and indistinct.

The spirit stone core at the center of the platform was riddled with cracks, with only a faint spiritual light occasionally flashing.

“It is indeed an ancient teleportation array.”

Master Xuanwei crouched down to examine it carefully. “The rune system is quite different from today’s, but the core principle is the same. As long as the missing runes are completed, the core cracks are repaired, and sufficient energy is injected, it should be able to activate.”

Chen Ping nodded, looking at the little fire qilin: “Little guy, it’s up to you now.”

The little fire qilin leaped off Chen Ping’s shoulder, trotted around the array platform once, and brought its nose close to the incomplete runes, occasionally emitting low “woof-woof” sounds.

After a moment, it raised one forepaw, the tip glowing with a crimson-gold light, and carefully touched a spot on the array platform.

“Buzz...”

The array platform trembled slightly, and a missing rune line was actually completed by the crimson-gold light, emitting a faint glow.

“It really works!” Su Qianyue exclaimed in surprise.

Chen Ping also crouched down, his palm circulating chaotic immortal power, carefully sensing the energy channels inside the array platform.

Chaotic immortal power can manifest countless forms, granting it a perception of array energy structures far surpassing that of ordinary spiritual power.

Soon, he discovered that three key energy nodes had dried up, and five rune connections had broken.

“Brother Lin, Miss Su, please help me stabilize the outer structure of the array platform.”

Chen Ping said in a deep voice, "Senior Chi Yun, when I repair the core, I need you to use your demonic flames to scorch the cracks and remelt the spirit stones."

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Everyone performed their respective duties.

Lin Xiao and Su Qianyue stood on either side of the array platform, their sword light and sound waves weaving into a net that enveloped the platform, preventing energy leakage and collapse during the repair process.

Chen Ping placed his hands on the center of the platform, his chaotic immortal power seeping into the spirit stone core like threads.

The core appeared to be on the verge of shattering, but its internal structure was exceptionally resilient. Chen Ping's immortal power acted like the finest scalpel, meticulously removing impurities from the cracks and guiding the spirit stone's own spirituality to heal the wounds.

At the same time, Chi Yun Demon Lord's demonic flames descended at the perfect moment. The dark red flames, extremely hot yet precisely controlled below the melting point of the spirit stones, fused together the cracked stones as if forging a divine weapon.

The Earth Fire Ancestor and True Person Xuanwei stood guard on the perimeter, vigilant for any potential dangers.

An hour later.

"Buzz!!!"

The entire array platform erupted with a dazzling azure light!

The incomplete runes were pieced together, and the ancient beast-shaped patterns seemed to come alive in the light, faintly echoing the roars of a hundred beasts.

At the center of the array platform, space began to distort, and a cyan vortex, about ten feet in diameter, slowly took shape.

“It’s done!”

Chen Ping stopped, his face slightly pale.

Repairing the ancient array had taken a heavy toll on his mental energy, but his eyes were filled with excitement.

Master Xuanwei carefully inspected the teleportation array and nodded, saying, “The stability is acceptable, but this array is too old. It can only teleport a maximum of five people at a time, and the destination may be slightly off.”

“Five people are enough.”

Chen Ping looked at the group, “Ancestor Earthfire, Senior Crimson Cloud, Master Xuanwei, Brother Lin, and I will go first. Miss Su and Little Fire Qilin will stay behind to guard the array platform. If we don’t return within three days, or if the platform shows any unusual activity, immediately destroy the array and evacuate.”

Although Su Qian Yue was reluctant, she knew the importance of the situation and nodded in agreement.

Little Fire Qilin rubbed against Chen Ping with a “woof,” seemingly reassuring him.

The five stepped into the azure vortex.

The world spun around them; the spatial pulling force far exceeded that of ordinary teleportation arrays.

Chen Ping used all his Chaos Immortal Power to protect his body, yet he still felt his internal organs shifting.

How much time passed was unknown—perhaps a moment, perhaps a long time.

“Boom!!!”

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The five stumbled and tumbled from mid-air, below them a continuous, verdant mountain range.

“This is the Hundred Beasts Mountain Range?”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord steadied himself, his scarlet demonic eyes scanning the surroundings.

From within the mountains, the faint roars of various beasts and the cries of birds could be heard. In the distance, a massive bird shadow swept across the sky, its wingspan exceeding ten zhang; from the depths of the valleys came the muffled sound of running, shaking the ground slightly.

But even more striking was the black and red resentment rising into the sky from the northwest, about a thousand miles away, and... the earth-shattering sounds of battle!

“Not good!”

Master Xuanwei’s expression changed. “That’s the direction of the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts! The Evil Path Palace is indeed attacking!”

A cold glint flashed in Chen Ping’s eyes: “Go!”

The five transformed into five streaks of light, rushing towards the direction of the most intense battle.

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The Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts, outside the protective array.

A massive, dark army of Soul Hunters, numbering over five thousand, pressed in like a storm cloud!

They formed a bizarre “Soul-Sealing Array,” their greyish-white aura of reincarnation weaving into a gigantic net covering dozens of miles in the air. This net continuously contracted, eroding the protective shield of the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts.

Within the shield, thousands of demonic beasts, under the command of their Beast Tamers, launched a frenzied counterattack.

Flaming Lions breathed fireballs, Thunderwing Golden Eagles summoned lightning, Armored Rhinoceroses formed a charging formation, and the Gale Wolf pack transformed into a blue whirlwind... The beast tide surged like a sea, yet it could not break through the eerie greyish-white net.

Even more terrifying were the three figures with terrifying auras at the forefront of the Soul Hunter army.

On the left was a giant puppet, two zhang tall, its body bound by soul-locking chains. Every step it took shook the earth—it was the “Soul-Suppressing Puppet General” of the Evil Path Hall.

On the right stood a gaunt old man wielding a white bone banner, its surface painted with countless contorted faces of agony. With a gentle shake, a piercing sonic boom reverberated through the protective barrier, causing ripples to spread across its surface.

In the center stood none other than Chen Ping’s old acquaintance, the Soul Devourer!

He still wore dark red scale armor, his six wings spread, his greyish-white eyes coldly fixed on the struggling Beast Valley below.

Though expressionless, the greyish-white spear in his hand, formed from the energy of reincarnation, tore a crack in the protective barrier with each thrust.

Inside Beast Valley, on a high platform built of beast bones,

a burly old man, clad in a beast-skin cloak, his red hair bristling like a lion's, directed the battle with bloodshot eyes.

Beside him crouched a five-zhang-tall, three-headed, ferocious flaming lion—the Valley Master Li Baichuan and his natal battle beast, the Three-Headed Flaming Lion King. “Valley Master! The protective barrier in the southeast corner is about to collapse!”

A beast tamer, covered in blood, staggered in.

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Li Baichuan roared, “Send the ‘Iron-Backed Earth Dragon’ to the southeast! Move all earth-type demonic beasts to the southeast corner to reinforce the defense!”

“Valley Master, our demonic beasts are being affected by the soul howl of that white bone banner; they’ve begun to agitate and suffer a backlash!”

Another elder cried out urgently.

Li Baichuan gritted his teeth, looking at the white bone banner in the air, a resolute glint in his eyes: “Lion King, follow me out and destroy that banner!”

The three Fiery Lion Kings roared in unison, their voices shaking the heavens.

But just then...

“Valley Master Li, wait!”

Five streaks of light descended from the sky, landing on the high platform—it was Chen Ping and his four companions!

Li Baichuan whirled around, his sharp, beast-like gaze sweeping over the five people. His eyes narrowed noticeably when he saw the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord: “Demonic cultivators? Who are you?!”

Master Xuanwei stepped forward, flicking his whisk: “Xuanwei of the Azure Nether Sword Sect, here with friends to lend a hand!”

“Azure Nether Sword Sect?”

Li Baichuan was taken aback, then a look of sorrow crossed his face. “Old Daoist Xuanwei... your sword sect, too...”

“Valley Master, now is not the time for reminiscing.”

Chen Ping stepped forward, his gaze fixed on the three figures in the air, lingering for a moment on the Soul-Devouring Puppet. “The most urgent task is to defeat the enemy.”

Li Baichuan sized up Chen Ping, seeing he was only a third-grade Celestial Immortal, and frowned: “Junior, this place is dangerous, not something you can...”

Before he finished speaking, Chen Ping had already leaped off the platform, the Dragon-Slaying Sword flashing from its sheath!

“Chaos – Creation!”

A hazy gray sword aura shot into the sky, not attacking the Soul-Devouring Puppet, but directly slashing at the gigantic gray-white net that covered the heavens and earth!

Where the sword aura passed, the gray-white net seemed to have met its nemesis, emitting a “hissing” sound as it dissolved, tearing open a gap a hundred feet long!

“What?!”

The withered old man holding the white bone banner was shocked.

The Soul-Devouring Puppet's gray-white eyes suddenly turned to Chen Ping, and for the first time, a fluctuation appeared in its empty pupils—the instinctive reaction of the rules of the Reincarnation Land to the power of chaos!

“It's you.”

The Soul-Devouring Puppet's mechanical voice rang out, “The person my master wanted.”

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It twirled its gray-white spear, abandoning its attack on the protective barrier, transforming it into a gray-white lightning bolt that shot straight at Chen Ping!

“Well done!” Chen Ping's eyes burned with fighting spirit, and he met the attack with his Dragon-Slaying Sword!

“Clang!!!”

Spear and sword clashed, erupting with a thunderous, metallic sound!

Chen Ping was forced back ten feet, his tiger's mouth split open, blood staining the hilt of his sword. The power of a peak Immortal was indeed terrifying.

However, the Soul-Devouring Puppet was also forced back three steps, and a fine crack appeared in the gray-white spear in its hand. The restraint of Chaotic Immortal Power on the Qi of Reincarnation far exceeded expectations!

“Attack together!”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord roared, his Demon Flame Blade reappearing, charging straight at the Soul-Suppressing Puppet General.

The Earth Fire Ancestor raised his hand and pressed down, a crimson-gold fire lotus blooming, and boundless Earth Fire True Flames transformed into nine fire dragons, coiling towards the withered old man holding the White Bone Banner.

Master Xuanwei and Lin Xiao charged into the Soul Hunter army, their sword light shattering soul armor, tearing open a counterattack path for the demonic beasts of the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts.

Seeing this, Li Baichuan didn't hesitate any longer, roaring to the sky, "Disciples of the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts, heed my command! Counterattack!"

"Roar!!!"

The Three-Headed Flaming Lion King was the first to break through the protective barrier, its three heads spewing flames, ice, and lightning respectively, instantly wiping out a group of Soul Hunters.

The Iron-Backed Earth Dragon emerged from the ground, its massive body like a moving hill, smashing the Soul Hunters' formation to pieces.

A flock of Thunderwing Golden Eagles swooped down from the sky, golden lightning raining down.

The Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts' counterattack had begun!

In the center of the battlefield, the battle between Chen Ping and the Soul-Devouring Puppet was the most intense.

Every collision between the gray-white spear and the Dragon-Slaying Sword unleashed a shockwave at the level of rules.

The Soul-Devouring Puppet's moves were devoid of any frills; every strike went straight for the vital points, and its power, speed, and angle were terrifyingly precise—the ultimate killing technique stripped of emotion, retaining only combat instinct.

However, Chen Ping's Chaotic Immortal Power subtly suppressed the opponent's Cycle Qi.

More importantly, as the battle progressed, Chen Ping discovered that while the Soul-Devouring Puppet's moves were fierce, they lacked variation—like a fixed program, perfect yet predictable.

“Chaotic Evolution – Earth Fire True Flame!”

Suddenly, crimson-gold Earth Fire True Flame surged from the Dragon-Slaying Sword, mixed with a hazy gray chaotic energy.

With a thrust, the Soul-Devouring Puppet instinctively blocked with its spear, but the Earth Fire True Flame spread up the spear, scorching the Cycle Qi patterns on its body.

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The Soul-Devouring Puppet's movements faltered slightly, for only a moment, but Chen Ping seized the opening.

“Dragon-Slaying – Breaking Army!”

The sword light, like a dragon, pierced straight into the gaps in the Soul-Devouring Puppet's chest scales!

“Pfft!”

The gray-white scales were pierced, the sword tip penetrating three inches into the flesh!

Dark red blood, tinged with grayish-white vapor, spurted out.

The Soul-Devouring Puppet glanced down at the sword wound on its chest, the vortex in its grayish-white eyes swirling rapidly, yet remaining utterly devoid of emotion.

It didn't even retreat; instead, its left hand shot out, its five fingers like hooks, grabbing straight for Chen Ping's face!

Trading injury for life!

Chen Ping's pupils contracted, and he quickly withdrew his sword, but his chest was still struck by the claw's wind, his clothes torn, leaving five bloody streaks.

"As expected, a puppet..." Chen Ping spat out a mouthful of blood, his eyes growing colder, "No pain, no fear, only absolute mission execution."

Such enemies are the most troublesome.

On the other side, the battle between the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord and the Soul-Suppressing Puppet General was nearing its end.

Although the Soul-Suppressing Puppet General possessed immense strength, its moves were clumsy. The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord used demonic flames to transform into countless fine threads, binding its joints, and finally beheaded it with a single strike. Its massive body collapsed with a crash.

The Earthfire Ancestor acted swiftly and decisively, trapping the withered old man with nine fire dragons, and suppressing him with a crimson-gold fire lotus, instantly reducing the white bone banner and the old man to ashes.

With the two puppet generals and the elder fallen, the Soul Hunter army was thrown into chaos.

Xuanwei Zhenren and Lin Xiao seized the opportunity to charge, and the demon beast army of Ten Thousand Beast Valley, like a burst dam, completely shattered the Soul Hunters' formation.

The Soul Devouring Puppet glanced around, its gray-white eyes flashing with data-like light for a moment, then turned without hesitation, its six wings flapping, transforming into a gray-white streak of light and fleeing towards the horizon!

"Trying to escape?"

Chen Ping gritted his teeth, wanting to give chase, but was stopped by the Earthfire Ancestor.

“Don’t pursue a cornered enemy. If he’s determined to escape, you won’t be able to catch him. Besides...”

The Earthfire Ancestor looked at the wound on Chen Ping’s chest, “Your injury is quite serious; healing is the priority.”

Chen Ping stared in the direction the Soul-Devouring Puppet had disappeared, gripping his sword hilt tightly.

This was merely a test; next time... it would be a fight to the death.

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Half an hour later, the battlefield was cleared.

Of the five thousand Soul Hunters, over three thousand were killed, the rest fleeing. The Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts also suffered heavy losses; hundreds of Beast Tamers died, over a thousand demonic beasts perished, and the valley’s protective formation was damaged in many places.

But regardless, this battle was won.

On the beast bone platform, Li Baichuan strode up to Chen Ping, his imposing figure like a small mountain. He carefully examined Chen Ping, then suddenly clasped his hands in a deep salute.

“Young friend, I will forever remember your life-saving grace! Please forgive my previous neglect!”

Chen Ping quickly returned the greeting: “Valley Master, you flatter me. The Evil Path Hall is the common enemy of the world; it is only right that we unite against it.”

Li Baichuan straightened up, his red hair flying, his voice booming: "Speak! You came here not just to lend a hand, did you? What do you need the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts' help for? As long as it doesn't violate our principles, I, Li, will not refuse!"

Chen Ping and Xuanwei Zhenren exchanged a glance, took a deep breath, and slowly said:

"We wish to request that the Valley Master... join forces with the Heavenly Sword Pavilion and the Five Elements Sect to form an 'Anti-Demon Alliance' to jointly destroy the Evil Path Hall!"

Li Baichuan's pupils contracted, and he remained silent for a long time.

Finally, he nodded emphatically.

"Good! The Evil Path Hall slaughtered thousands of my fellow disciples; this hatred is irreconcilable! The Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts... joins the alliance!"

"However..."

His tone shifted, looking at Chen Ping, a beast-king-like sharpness flashing in his eyes, "That stubborn old man Dugu Ao of the Heavenly Sword Pavilion, and that slippery Jin Buhuan of the Five Elements Sect, won't be easy to persuade. Young friend, if you truly wish to forge an alliance, the road ahead... won't be easy."

Chen Ping gripped his sword hilt, his gaze resolute: "No matter how difficult, I will proceed."

"Since you are so determined, young friend, rest in the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts for a few days. I will also be able to thank you for saving my life!" Li Baichuan said.

"Alright!" Chen Ping nodded!

Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts, Beast Bone Hall.

Li Baichuan prepared a simple yet sincere banquet to entertain Chen Ping and his party.

Despite the chaos of war, the valley still brought out its treasured “Hundred Beast Blood Brew” and “Spirit Fruit Candied Fruit.” The bonfire crackled in the center of the hall, illuminating the solemn faces of the assembled guests.

“That old scoundrel Dugu Ao, three hundred years ago, debated with me at Heavenly Sword Cliff, almost coming to blows over a piece of Star Iron.”

Li Baichuan downed a large gulp of blood wine, stroking his red beard. “His temper is so bad; once he’s made up his mind, not even nine oxen could pull him back. You want him to bow his head and form an alliance with outsiders... it’s difficult.”

Li Baichuan repeated this to Chen Ping during the meal.

Master Xuanwei stroked his beard and said, “Although Pavilion Master Dugu is arrogant, he is not unreasonable. The Evil Path Hall is powerful, and the Heavenly Sword Pavilion alone cannot withstand it. He should understand this.”

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“Reason?”

Li Baichuan scoffed, “Trying to reason with a sword fanatic? His mind is filled with nothing but swords! Unless you can surpass him in swordsmanship, no matter how much you argue, he will only reply with ‘noisy.’”

Chen Ping pondered, “Surpass him in swordsmanship...?”

Li Baichuan glanced at Chen Ping and said, “Young friend, although Dugu Ao is only at the peak of the ninth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm, his swordsmanship is said to have reached the threshold of ‘man and sword as one.’ Although you are strong, you are not a specialist in swordsmanship...”

“It doesn’t necessarily require completely surpassing him in swordsmanship.”

A glint flashed in Chen Ping's eyes, "As long as he sees that beyond swordsmanship there is a higher level of Dao, that will be enough to make him take us seriously."

He turned to Li Baichuan: "Valley Master, what about the Five Elements Sect?"

Li Baichuan's expression... Even stranger: "That old fox Jin Buhuan... Let me put it this way, the Five Elements Sect has been embroiled in internal strife for centuries. Jin Buhuan's ability to hold onto his position as sect leader isn't based on having the highest cultivation, but on his exceptional ability to weigh power and maintain balance."

"If you want to persuade him, you'll first need to figure out how to resolve the Five Elements Sect's internal conflict. Otherwise, the moment you leave, the five branches will be arguing endlessly about whether or not they should form an alliance."

The Earth Fire Ancestor slowly said, "The root of the Five Elements Sect's problem lies in the imbalance of the Five Elements. The five branches—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth—are vying for sect resources, each wanting their own branch to dominate. If we can help them find a way to balance the Five Elements, the internal strife will resolve itself."

"Balance of the Five Elements..." Chen Ping pondered for a moment, then suddenly looked at the little fire qilin on his shoulder, "Little guy, you're naturally close to the rules of heaven and earth, can you sense the flow of the Five Elements?"

The little fire qilin nodded with a "roar," its tiny claws tracing patterns in the air, outlining five-colored light points that chased and flowed together, forming a miniature cycle of the Five Elements. "Brilliant!"

Master Xuanwei's eyes lit up. "Although the Five Elements Sect cultivates the Five Elements Dao, each disciple cultivates their own lineage, thus losing the true meaning of the Five Elements' mutual generation and balance. If we can use the Chaos Immortal Power as a guide, supplemented by this little fellow's perception of the rules of heaven and earth, perhaps we can truly help them restore balance!"

Chen Ping stood up: "Then let's go to the Heavenly Sword Pavilion first. Valley Master, could we borrow a few flying demonic beasts for transportation?"

Li Baichuan waved his hand: “Don’t say borrow! Thunderwing!”

A loud eagle’s cry came from outside the hall, and a giant eagle with a wingspan of over fifteen zhang and its body wrapped in golden lightning landed. It was none other than the Thunderwing Golden Eagle King, one of the guardian beasts of the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts.

“Let it carry you. This eagle is incredibly fast; traveling 100,000 li a day is no problem. Also...”

Li Baichuan took out a beast tooth token, “With this token, all the demonic beasts within the jurisdiction of the Valley of Ten Thousand Beasts will not attack you. If you encounter danger, crush the token, and I will immediately lead a beast tide to your aid!”

Chen Ping solemnly accepted it: “Thank you, Valley Master.”

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Three days later, the Heavenly Sword Mountain Range.

The mountains, like swords, pierced the clouds. The entire mountain range was permeated with a sharp sword aura; ordinary cultivators would feel a stinging pain on their skin if they approached within a hundred li. In the center of the mountain range, a magnificent palace entirely cast from black iron stood atop the highest peak—the Heavenly Sword Pavilion.

The Thunderwing Golden Eagle King dared not enter beyond a hundred li—the sword aura here had a natural suppression effect on demonic beasts.

Chen Ping and his group of five flew through the air. As soon as they entered the mountain range, several sword lights pierced through the air.

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“Halt!”

Seven white-robed sword cultivators blocked their path. The leader was a handsome young man with a refined appearance, carrying two swords on his back. His aura was sharp and powerful; he had already reached the seventh rank of the Celestial Immortal realm.

His gaze swept over the group, lingering for a moment on the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord, his brow furrowing slightly.

“The Heavenly Sword Pavilion’s forbidden area, all unauthorized personnel must leave immediately!”

Master Xuanwei stepped forward: “Xuanwei of the Azure Nether Sword Sect, accompanied by a friend, requests an audience with Pavilion Master Dugu.”

“Azure Nether Sword Sect?”

The young swordsman was taken aback, then his expression softened slightly. “So it’s Senior Xuanwei. We’ve already heard about your sect’s affairs... please accept our condolences. However, the Pavilion Master is currently in seclusion, comprehending the sword path, and will not receive guests.”

“In seclusion?”

Chen Ping spoke, “Then please inform him... that someone wishes to duel with him.”

The young swordsman looked at Chen Ping, seeing that he was only at the third rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm, and shook his head, saying, “I appreciate your kindness. However, the Pavilion Master only allows duels with those skilled in the sword path. You should...”

Before he finished speaking, Chen Ping formed a sword with his fingers and lightly drew a line.

He didn’t use Chaos Immortal Power, nor did he activate his Golden Dragon bloodline; it was simply the purest sword intent.

“Swoosh...”

In the void, a crack as thin as a hair quietly appeared.

Around the crack, sword energy flowed spontaneously, evolving into illusory images of the sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, and vegetation, as if a small world contained within a single sword strike.

The young swordsman's pupils constricted sharply, and the six swordsmen behind him simultaneously took a step back, their longswords trembling uncontrollably!

"This is... Sword Intent Transformation?!"

The young swordsman's voice trembled, "The legendary realm beyond 'Man and Sword as One'?!"

Chen Ping withdrew his finger, and the crack vanished. He said calmly, "Now, may I report?"

The young swordsman took a deep breath, solemnly clasped his sword, and bowed: "This junior's eyesight is poor; please wait a moment, senior, I will report immediately!"

He transformed into a beam of sword light and rushed towards the Heavenly Sword Pavilion, returning in less than the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, his attitude even more respectful: "The Pavilion Master requests your presence; please follow me."

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The Heavenly Sword Pavilion, the Sword-Debating Platform.

This is a circular platform suspended above a sea of clouds, entirely constructed of a black, peculiar stone called the "Sword-Testing Stone." Its surface is covered with sword marks of varying depths, each retaining a sharp, piercing sword intent.

In the center of the platform, an elderly man dressed in hemp robes, his hair disheveled and graying, stands with his back to the crowd, gazing up at the sky.

A seemingly ordinary iron sword hangs at his waist, its scabbard weathered, but Chen Ping can sense the terrifying sharpness contained within.

“Pavilion Master Dugu,” Master Xuanwei bows.

Dugu Ao slowly turns around.

His face is ordinary, even somewhat disheveled, but his eyes are like two unsheathed divine swords, sharp enough to pierce the heart.

He doesn't look at Master Xuanwei, nor at anyone else; his gaze falls directly on Chen Ping.

“Your sword intent is very interesting.”

Dugu Ao spoke, his voice hoarse, “It's not pure swordsmanship, yet it's broader than pure swordsmanship...”

Chen Ping clasped his hands in greeting: “Junior Chen Ping greets Senior.”

“Chen Ping...”

Dugu Ao repeated the name, a flash of sword light in his eyes, “Three months ago, in the Eleventh Heaven's Heart Demon Abyss, it was you who severely injured the Soul Devouring Venerable?”

“Yes.” Chen Ping nodded!

Although he didn't know how Dugu Ao knew about this, knowing it allowed him to better understand his own strength.

“Very good.”

Dugu Ao nodded, "To severely injure that old demon, you are qualified to stand here. Speak, what do you want with me? If it's just a sword duel, we can begin now."

Chen Ping went straight to the point: "I wish to invite the Heavenly Sword Pavilion to join the alliance to jointly destroy the Evil Path Hall."

Dugu Ao remained silent.

After a long pause, he slowly said, "The swords of the Heavenly Sword Pavilion are wielded only for themselves. If the Evil Path Hall doesn't offend me, why should I offend them?"

"If the lips are gone, the teeth will be cold."

Chen Ping said in a deep voice, "The Evil Path Hall wants the souls of all cultivators, and the Heavenly Sword Pavilion will be no exception. After they've dealt with the other forces, this place will be next."

"Then let them come."

A glint of fanaticism flashed in Dugu Ao's eyes, "Perfect timing, my sword hasn't drunk the blood of an Immortal in a long time."